



One Tough Track

Story and Photos by SSG Alberto Betancourt

THE U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command's National Automotive Center and the U.S. Marine Corps Systems Command have joined forces in the creation of a track to demonstrate the capabilities of future vehicles.

"The Severe Off-Road Track will allow decision-makers a first-hand look at the capabilities of various vehicles the Army and the Marines are considering for a more formal acquisition program," said TACOM public affairs officer Eric Emerton.

(Left) A Dodge Ram tackles a downhill, dirt portion of the SORT. The Ram is being considered as a multi-role logistics vehicle under the Commercially Based Tactical Truck, or COMBATT, program.

(Right) The Ram takes on the SORT's 125-foot uphill rock climb.





The Marine Corps Systems Command's Interim Fast Attack Vehicle prototype maneuvers through the SORT's six-foot-deep "V" crossing.

He said the two-mile SORT is a permanent demonstration and evaluation course that can be used by the services and industry to exhibit vehicles and vehicle technologies that show potential for military applications.

Located in the Transportation Demonstra-

tion Support Area at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., the oval track features numerous challenges designed to approximate the terrain a vehicle might encounter in a military environment, a border-patrol assignment or a homeland-defense mission.

With the severity of the obstacles ranging from a 125-foot uphill rock climb to a log climb, the SORT

gives evaluators an opportunity to get a quick, informal assessment of real-world, off-road vehicle performance.

Paul Skalny, NAC's deputy director, said Congress continuously asks how his agency is investing and how it leverages off other services and industry.

Skalny described the venture as a "win-win partnership" where each service splits the resources down the middle.

"We're in business to work with industry and accelerate the infusion of commercially viable technology," he said. "That's the technology that industry is putting out into the mass marketplace and we want to bring it into our military land-warfare system." □

The SORT's log climb assesses a vehicle's suspension, ground clearance and overall chassis balance.

